

Meals on Wheels Service
By Betty Bancroft
2007

In October 1965 Bradwell Parish Council invited car owners/drivers to attend a meeting with a member of the Women's Royal Volunteers Service (WRVS) to discuss the possibility of embarking on a Meals on Wheels Scheme for the elderly people of Bradwell. About a dozen people, all ladies, attended and agreed to try out the scheme starting in November and supplying meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Mrs. Grace Pashley offered to prepare a rota and it was agreed it would be better to work in pairs, to help the meals to be delivered as quickly as possible. Mrs. Betty Bancroft agreed to be the treasurer, which meant the money collected for the meals was taken to the NatWest sub Branch in Bradwell, which in 1965 attended 3 times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday for 1 - 2 hour sessions in Miss Emma Middleton's front room. The meals, main course and pudding, were cooked at the Junior School, put into individual metal containers, and kept into a hot box, complete with a charcoal compartment. The hot box, when full, was quite heavy to lift into the car boot the main reason it was better for 2 people to work together. No volunteer in Bradwell accepted any reimbursement for neither the use of their car nor for petrol. We had the option of insuring our cars with the WRVS for a nominal amount against an accident whilst delivering the meals. The canteen staff at the school kindly washed up the empty containers, which I believe was really our job, so this saved us another 20 minutes or so each time. The whole operation took about 1½ hours to collect the meals, deliver, and return the empties to the school. The price for the meals was 1s. 0d. (10p in to-days money) but the price gradually increased over the years, to just over £1 by the time we stopped delivering. In the late 1990's the choice of either hot or frozen food was made available and by this time the meals were packed in foil containers and heated at Caroline Court, Hope. For some time we were delivering both hot and frozen meals together. Over the years the volunteers had changed and by the late 1980's some men had come along to help deliver the meals. On 14th. October 1985 Mrs Grace Pashley, Mrs. Doreen Bradwell and Mrs. Betty Bancroft were presented with Long Service Medals at a reception in the George VI Trust Hall, Belper. We had attended first aid and emergency contingency classes, as well as sorting out clean clothing collected each year, and taking out the meals on wheels of course. On winter days when our cars were unable to battle with snow and ice, we would walk to the school complete with shopping bags, hot water bottles, thick towels to wrap around the meals and walk - or slide- around the village making sure the meals were delivered. Most people were very grateful for this service and would tell us so, which of course, made it all worthwhile. As well as been grateful for the meal, they appreciated a chat whilst we put the food out onto their own plates. The service stopped in September 2002 after, in some small way, hundreds of people have been helped over the 37 years of Meals on Wheels in Bradwell

A poem

WE PUT THE HOT LOCK IN THE BOOT,
AND SET OFF UP THE HILL
TO TAKE HOT DINNERS TO THE FOLK
WHO'RE ELDERLY OR ILL.
WE TAKE THEM SAUSAGES OR BEEF
AND PARSLEY SAUCE ON FISH,
SOME APPLE CRUMBLE AND CUSTARD

EACH IN IT'S OWN FOIL DISH.

WE HOPE THE MEAL WILL BE ENJOYED
AND NOURISH MIND AND SOUL,
AND PROVE TO BE MORE INTERESTING,
THAN CHEESE AND BUTTERED ROLL.
I AM SURE THEY ARE MOST GRATEFUL
SOMETIMES THEY TELL US SO,
ESPECIALLY IN WINTERTIME
WHEN ROADS ARE THICK WITH SNOW.

SOMETIMES WE GET SO VERY WET,
OR SWELTER IN THE SUN,
BUT CARRY ON QUITE CHEERFULLY,
UNTIL OUR JOB IS DONE.
THE ONE THING THAT MOST PEOPLE WANT
IS JUST A FRIENDLY CHAT,
AND WE ARE PLEASED IN SOME SMALL WAY,
TO HELP PROVIDE - JUST THAT!

E.C.BANCROFT